

Ecosystem-based approaches to building community resilience in Vanuatu, a comparison to New Zealand efforts

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On behalf of the Pacific Community and Government of Vanuatu, Opus is working on a project in Vanuatu which seeks to increase the resilience of communities in the context of global environmental changes. The project aims at supporting adaptation to climate change through integrated coastal management (ICM). ICM's overall goal is to facilitate the sustainable development of coastal zones by preserving the integrity of coastal ecosystems and biodiversity. Most of the solutions to adapt to climate change in Vanuatu require the protection (or restoration) of coastal ecosystems and biodiversity. Our project aims at implementing win-win solutions that maintain and enhance the resilience of both coastal ecosystems and human communities.

With climate change predictions, the severity of extreme weather events is likely to increase and create conditions that further favour ecosystem degradation. Furthermore, the subsistence food production systems adopted by Vanuatu communities provides a further degree of ecosystem disturbance that also greatly favours invasive species.

Management of invasive species and undertaking ecological restoration both on land and in the coastal marine environment are key activities for these largely subsistence based communities.

While methods have been developed in some parts of the world that have been moderately successful in controlling invasive species or restoring environmental systems, Vanuatu communities generally do not have the resources to apply such methods on a consistent and on-going basis.

In contrast, some developments in New Zealand do not tend to have such an ecosystem based resilience focus. Ecological enhancements are usually driven from a conservation perspective, with ecosystem services more implicit within the project.

Our poster will detail our findings to date in Vanuatu and provide a comparison with a greenfield development north of Auckland where 5 km of rural streams are being restored.